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THE SYMBOL AND THE ANT

THE EDITOR

ELSEWHERE in this issue the reader will find several references to the need for the symbol in human and Christian life. The emphasis is nothing new to this review, which has for some years past pointed to the central place of the signs evoked naturally by man so as to bind him at once to the universe of which he is a part and to God of whom he is a dependant. The signs have been made into vehicles of grace by the Incarnation—the unique and central sign—with the result that the Bible, the Liturgy and all the sacraments are unifying, integrating and health-giving (i.e. salutary) in a physical, psychological and spiritual manner all at once. In this way the sciences of archaeology, anthropology, comparative religions and many others can serve to broaden and deepen the life of the spirit so long as the student clings firmly in faith to the fact of the Word made flesh.

Wherever we turn these sciences can be found revealing these spiritual realities. Recently it has been shown that this use of the symbol is natural and instinctive at the animal level. In his book on *Animal Courtship* (Hutchinson; 16s.), Dr Maurice Burton describes the symbolic acts used by many animals and birds in their type of love and union. Every child has watched with fascination the gyrations of the drake's head as he appears to drop a sip of water on his own back in an often-repeated ritual, and the waltzing of the pigeons in the park give joy to the children playing there. Not so many have been privileged to watch the March hare in his rites that have drawn down the ignominy of madness on his head. But perhaps strangest of all is the *fermentum* of the worker ants who pass on a drop of food from one to the other when they meet for no apparent utilitarian purpose. Mr Morley, in his recent 'Pelican Book' on *The Ant World*, writes of this fact as an 'important emotional bond' between the ants; and he adds: 'It is, as any student of ants will tell you, the symbolic action of the ant colony. It goes on

constantly wherever ants meet, even if both have well-filled crops, and in the case of a stranger ant, placed within the gates by some experimenter, it is the symbol of final acceptance and unity within the colony.⁷ These tiny insects provide many other illustrations of mutual interchanges which hold them together, and of symbolic actions such as the well-known virginal flight of the queen, as also with the bee; so that modern study reveals still more depths in the words of Proverbs: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise' (6, 6). The early Fathers were ready enough to learn from the ant as from all the beasts of God's creation; and now after many a century we are being encouraged to return to the study of the spiritual life in the book of nature.

It is not that these animals and insects can 'mean' anything deliberately by these signs—for the giving or using of the *meaning* of things is proper to the special type of animal that is man. Subsequent study, too, may reveal that all these symbolic rites in irrational creation have some strictly utilitarian or biological explanation. Yet the fact still remains that they do not live together and mate and feed like mere machines in the way that man, cut off from nature and her world of symbols, is tending to treat mankind today. Such natural actions and demonstrations raised to a human and indeed to a supernatural level will discover man within the created universe, sanctifying it together with himself and leading it back to God.

Once again, then, the Christian may return to his *Besaries* and draw the morals from the behaviour of the orders of creation that have no reason. And he can do so with an even greater appreciation of that other world as the sciences continue to show him that he belongs there as well as in heaven. We can very well, with the counsel of the Book of Proverbs, make our spiritual reading from the books on the ants and on animal courtship. And we shall thus find that we cannot merely ignore or reject these natural bonds of the symbol that express the instinctive movements and rhythms of creation which throb within our veins as much as and more than in those of the mad March hare.

AFTER TEN YEARS¹

HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.—John 21, 17.

KNOWING his end to be drawing near—it was in fact the day before his death—Fr Vincent McNabb was concerned to make certain provisions for his funeral. Calling one of the younger brethren to him, he said to him: ‘Dear Father, I may well be dead tomorrow and there is a service I would ask of your charity. I don’t want a shaped and polished coffin such as they usually provide, nor should I like to have a brass factory-made cross on it nor be labelled with a brass label. I want an ordinary box made of the same sort of wood as this floor’—and he pointed with a smile to the common deal floor, uneven and knotted, which he had swept day by day with his bare hand, a floor such as had been his only bed for forty years and more. ‘You will want some measurements, of course; go and get a tape and measure me now; leave a bit extra length for me to stretch and plenty of room for the shoulders. When I am in the box and have been taken down to the church, bring away the lid and get out your brushes and black pigment and paint a cross on it, a good big one. Then you will want the inscription; I will dictate it to you: “*Ven. et Adm. R. P. F. Vincentius McNabb, O.P., S.T.M. Natus 8 Julii 1868. Professus 28 Nov. 1886. Mortuus*”—I don’t know the date, probably tomorrow, but anyway, “*1943 Londini*”. Now after that I want you to put a Greek inscription.’ He then recited by heart these words:

Κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις δτι φιλῶ σε

They are the words of my text: ‘Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee’. ‘Then’, he continued, ‘after the *Requiem* and the *Libera*, to Kensal Green. I don’t wish to be taken there in a glass-house. Borrow the builder’s

¹ Text of a sermon preached by Very Rev. Fr Hilary Carpenter, O.P., Provincial, at the tenth anniversary memorial *Requiem* for Fr Vincent McNabb, O.P.

orry and let down the sides. Put me on it, and let the two colytes sit one on either side with their candles. (Don't light the candles; they will only get blown out.) Have the boy with the processional cross with his back to the driver's ab, and let me be driven to Kensal Green like that. Of course I know what some people will say: "That's McNabb and his tomfoolery, McNabb and his publicity, showing off." But it isn't that, my dear Father, it isn't that. All my life I have preached and when I am no longer alive I shall still preach. I shall preach even with my dead body. . . . Now of course I realise that I have a vow of obedience and you will need the Prior's permission to do all this.'

In these his last hours Fr Vincent was meeting death as he had lived his whole life. In the incident which I have related to you we may truly see a summary of his whole approach to his religious and apostolic life. His humour was here and his humanity, his obedience, his zeal for the preaching of the word of God, his deep sincerity and dislike of the sham, and above all as a central theme his profound and burning desire to love and serve our divine Lord. 'Do me a last favour, dear Father', he said to the same young priest. 'Read to me the Passion of our dear Lord according to St Mark.'

From his early youth he was absorbed in the pursuit of truth and its understanding, for he realised that truth wherever he might find it would help him to a knowledge and deeper understanding of the ultimate and eternal truth which is God himself. As a young Dominican, he told us, he would try with all his power to use the intelligence God had given him, to think. 'Think of anything', he would say to us, 'but for God's sake think.' He did not use that phrase lightly, as so many of us might. He meant literally that our thinking was for God's sake. All his own thought led him to God, and the fruit of his thinking was in every word he spoke or wrote.

But not even the ultimate truth, which is God himself, was for Fr Vincent something merely to be known. Truth was to be known in order that it might be loved; it is the greater knowledge of God that can best lead to a greater love of God.

As the inevitable outcome of this intense love of God in Fr Vincent came the scarcely less intense desire in him to bring all men, as far as in him lay, to this same knowledge and so to this same love of God. This love was a burning flame in him; it drove him into the highways and byways seeking souls; whether in the pulpit or in the public park, in the drawing-rooms of the rich or (as he preferred) in the houses of the poor, amongst university professors or working men, with Catholics or with those outside the fold, the truth he loved would be told and his very love of it seemed to show him the way. He was what is called a 'popular' speaker, and he was so in every sense of the word except in the modern accepted sense. He was always concerned to speak to the people, and it was his peculiar gift that he could speak intelligibly to people in every walk of life. But it was his method, not his matter, that varied according to the needs and capacity of his hearers. No matter what the audience, it was the truth, God's truth, that he told. He did not fear to speak to children on the profound mysteries of the Faith, nor did the childlikeness that remained with this Master of Theology to the end fail to win their interest or minister to their understanding. A true son of St Dominic, Fr Vincent was, like him, above all *Doctor Veritatis*—a Teacher of Truth.

Few priests have made a greater or more lasting impact on this country as a whole during the present century than Fr Vincent McNabb. He became something of a legend even in his own lifetime. He may have seemed to some to have been given overmuch to paradox, seemed something of a living paradox himself. This was partly because of his own uncompromising sincerity which stood out so forcibly in an age so much committed to what is sham and unreal. But it was still more because he was so well fitted by nature and grace to appreciate and to reflect the supreme paradox of Divine Truth Incarnate, Divine Truth which is not merely a Divine Idea but also a Divine Person, the Word made flesh, the Word which moves both mind and heart and which, so freely received, must be no less freely given to others.

He was an outstanding product of his family background

and unbringing where the deep, consuming faith of the Irish was grafted on to a practically minded and naturally philosophical stock. For him a Dominican vocation was the obvious, one might almost say the inevitable, one. The teaching of St Thomas Aquinas inspired by the apostolic spirit of St Dominic was wholly attractive and satisfying to his truth-loving and ardent character. The Order to which he knew himself called in his youth, and in which he was to prove himself so shining a light in his later years, is properly called the Order of Preachers, and its motto is the single word *Veritas*—Truth.

In him there was a rocklike and unquestioning faith and an unswerving loyalty to the teaching of the Church. Yet he knew that he must be prepared to give a reason for the faith that was in him, must be prepared to defend that loyalty. He knew too, none better, how the visible things of creation could help make manifest the invisible things of God. It was with this in his mind that he devoted himself to the deep study of philosophy, of theology and of Holy scripture. Above all he steeped himself in the Gospel till it became alive for him and he found understanding and love of the Word of God in the Incarnation, found too his own divine commission to preach and to teach.

'Lovest thou me more than these?' asked our Lord of St Peter for the third time. 'Lord, thou knowest all things', answered Peter; 'thou knowest that I love thee.' And our Lord said to him: 'Feed my sheep'. It was this greater love that gave to St Dominic the power and fruit that was in his preaching, moved men to call him 'another Christ' for the mind and heart of Christ that was in him. It is this greater love alone that guarantees the power and the fruit in the preaching of his sons, the Friars Preachers. And it was certainly the source of that most fruitful apostolate of the great Friar Preacher whose memory we recall today. When he was quoting the Greek text, Fr Vincent asked the young Father to verify it in the *Codex Sinaiticus* of which there was a copy in the library. 'That early text will help to confirm my opinion that St Peter did not say "Thou knowest that I love thee" but "Thou knowest if I love thee". I am at the end of a long life and even now I do not know if I

have loved our Lord as I ought.' But, after our Lord's reply, Peter could have had no doubt, for he was given the commission to feed the flock of the Good Shepherd, a commission given only to those who have that greater love. And that same commission was given so surely and so fruitfully to Fr Vincent.

Why are we concerned to keep his memory green? There are those who believe that Fr Vincent was a saint. We, his brethren, who knew him so intimately, though we would not by one word seem to arrogate to ourselves what is in the sole judgment of the Church, we saw in him at any rate this intense love of our Lord and of souls. We knew the almost unbelievable austerities of his daily life, his love of his brethren; we knew his personal humility, we whose feet he had kissed when he thought he had offended us, or worse still for us, when we had done him some hurt. In this learned Master of Theology and powerful preacher there was the simplicity of a child. While he was already a dying man prayers were asked for him from the Rosary Guild. They offered their Holy Communions, said rosaries, made visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and all these were inscribed upon parchment in the form of a Spiritual Bouquet. The Father concerned with the making of this looked for Fr Vincent and found him in the library. 'I have brought you a Spiritual Bouquet from the Rosary Guild, Father', he said. Fr Vincent came to him, with that wonderful smile, knelt at his feet and received the offering in his outstretched hands, while the tears of gratitude coursed down his lined face.

But yet it is not merely for his great qualities of soul, for the example of his virtues, that we strive to perpetuate his memory. 'I have preached all my life', he said, 'and when I live no longer I shall still preach.' As you are no doubt well aware, we hope to establish here at St Dominic's, London, the Father Vincent McNabb Memorial Centre. To this project His Eminence Cardinal Griffin has lent his warmest support and has specially blessed all those who play their part in its realisation. Financial help is being publicly asked, with his approval, for at least £3,000 will be needed. If we thus aim to perpetuate his memory it is not merely, as we have said, to recall a great personality and a life's work

which ended ten years ago; it is in order that we may continue, in our own several ways, that same Christlike apostolate with the example of this great Friar Preacher to guide us and his devotion to inspire us; it is that he may still preach through our means. We can hardly hope to measure up to his gigantic stature, but please God we may bring to the work something of his zeal for truth, something of his unswerving sincerity, and above all something of his burning and absorbing love of our Lord.

So many of us already owe him so much. We can best repay our debt by ensuring, in whatever way we can, that the good he wrought is not interred with his bones. There is only one other thing he himself would ask of us, as he so often asked in his lifetime, that we should pray for his soul. And we, who trust that the Lord he loved has taken him into the eternal happiness of heaven, nevertheless will make that prayer for him. May his great soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

THE ANGELS AND PRAYER

ELIZABETH STOPP

IT is the business of the angels to mediate between God and mankind, to make his wishes known to us by enlightening our intelligence so that we may see more clearly what God wants of us, and thus may run more freely in the way of his holy will. It is their office to draw us ever closer to that love and praise of God which is their very existence; but whatever they are doing to help us, their gaze remains fixed upon the eternal Godhead, the Blessed Trinity. We are told in the scriptures that the angels have eyes at the back of their head as well as the front; in fact, in Ezechiel's vision the cherubim and the very wheels upon which they move are studded with eyes: 'And their whole body and their necks and their hands and their wings and the circles were full of eyes, round about the four wheels.' (10, 12.) This is the symbolism, magnificent in itself, though humanly helpless in the face of the unutterable, by which the prophet tries to convey the truth that the angels never lose sight of God although they are at the same time wholly

bent upon the execution of his commands here on earth.

If this is so, in what great intensity of prayer and love must the angels be concentrated when our Lord is made present on the altar at Mass and, his sacrifice renewed, comes to feed us with himself? Wherever the Blessed Sacrament is, there is God, and there, because God is infinitely simple and contained only within himself in the three persons, there is the whole court of heaven, all the angels and all the saints. That is what the Incarnation means: all heaven come down to earth in his train, ours for the asking, ours for the taking, in the hidden way we may 'take' it and live in it already here on earth. St Paul says to the Hebrews: 'The scene of your approach (to God) now is Mount Sion, is the heavenly Jerusalem, city of the living God; here are gathered thousands upon thousands of angels.'

The angels will help us to 'ask' and to 'take' if only we will turn to them, especially during the sacrifice of the Mass. Indeed, we make them happy by asking for their help, if, as St Thomas confirms, we may speak of increasing the happiness of beings who are with God; for thus we in turn help them to fulfil their function. They are like the priest. In the book in which he sets forth his ideas and speculations about the heavenly hosts, Dionysius tells us that the angels are often seen in the scriptures in priestly robes, because 'they initiate us to the contemplation of heavenly mysteries, and because their existence is wholly consecrated to God'. (Coel. Hier. 15). The liturgy of the Mass is crowded with angels, explicitly and by implication. We are hardly aware of them; they are part of the well-known landscape of the Mass. But it is a most rewarding thing to go through the Mass and single them out for once, for when they slip back into position, everything is made more vivid.

Before the Mass begins, when we are purified by the sacramental of holy water in the *Asperges*, the priest asks God to help us through his holy angel:

Hear us, O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God:
and vouchsafe to send thy holy angel from heaven to
guard, cherish, protect, visit and defend all that dwell
in this house. Amen.

For the purpose of this prayer the church is called *habit-*

aculum—‘little house’. The adjective is perhaps surprising in such a context, but conveys exactly that sense of homelessness and family feeling, of Nazareth, that should reign at the celebration of the feast of love, even though the *habitaculum* be St Peter’s in Rome. The string of verbs explaining what it is we ask of God’s angel: *qui custodiat, foveat, protegat, visitet atque defendat . . .* forms a kind of crescendo of security in keeping with the impression conveyed by the use of the word *habitaculum*. The word *foveat* is especially full of God’s tenderness: his angel is to make us feel welcome and thoroughly at home while we are his guests at the *Agape*; he is to love and cherish us on our Father’s behalf, not only to fulfil the sterner duties of guarding and defending against malign influences those who have come to the banquet; he is to extend loving hospitality in the full sense of the word, so that no one need go away saying: ‘Thou gavest me no kiss’.

This prayer is not only said in a church, but wherever the *Asperges* is liturgically used, as in the sickroom before the priest administers Holy Communion. When the Blessed Sacrament is brought there, any house becomes God’s house, God’s little house;—(it is baffling to translate the Latin diminutive which is in itself quite devoid of the tinge of sentimentality that may slip in with the adjective ‘little’ in English)—it becomes a church and a temple of God for the time being, with one special angel to visit and to cherish this one guest who is in need.

The angels, as it has been said, are recalled in the Mass in two different ways: by explicit mention, as in the *Asperges* prayer, and implicitly, as for instance in the *Gloria*, where the very words of the angels are used: *Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*. Praise and glory are then repeated in words of earthly, not heavenly origin, and finally the supplication of the *Kyrie eleison* is continued in a plea for mercy addressed to God the Son, the Lamb of God. Every word in the Mass draws, or should draw, our thoughts to the Word Incarnate, and there could be no better preparation of mind and heart for the Calvary that is to come than the memory of Bethlehem. The angels sing to us anew every day in the Mass; the Church is telling us that

we are those shepherds, or perhaps she is trying to tell us that we should be as those shepherds, humble, poor, intent, if we could hear and see anew the angel of the Lord who comes to stand by us at Mass, as he came to the shepherds in the fields; and that the glory of the Lord may shine about us now as then, but not now in a way that can make us afraid, for we know the tiding of great joy that he comes to bring. 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.' At the *Gloria* we join in their song, pray with them in a way that is actual and real, for they are still singing this same song of praise in heaven, and because of Christ's coming, heaven has begun for us on earth. Up to a point it depends on us whether at Mass we are as the shepherds who hear them, or as those same shepherds when the angel had left them and gone back into heaven. Our Lord said to St Catherine of Siena: 'Think of me and I will think of thee'. So it is with the angels. Devotion to them is, with God's grace, an infallible way of keeping them as it were on earth, and of enjoying their help at all times, but more especially at Mass.

And then, when the angels have become a vivid reality to us, we think of them as friends, as fellow creatures before the throne of God and joined in common worship at God's altar. We can only guess clumsily at their mode of existence, but because we love them as friends, no detail about them seems trivial, no speculation merely idle. It all helps to make us more at home in what is after all our real home, and that is what the angels want. Thus we may be permitted to speculate about the joy of the angel chosen to speak to the shepherds on Christmas night, and destined for this message from all eternity; the happiness of those other multitudes who were allowed to join him and sing the first *Gloria* on earth—'for now the angels can satisfy their eager gaze' (I Peter 1, 12; R. Knox translation). We may ask these angels, through their King in the manger and their Queen who watched over him, to offer our praise with theirs, and to give us a share, however small, in their joy and certainty and love.

In the priest's prayer before the gospel there is another implicit reference to the angels and to the kind of service they may render at God's bidding. The prayer refers to a chapter in Isaias that contains one of man's most glorious visions of the angels. The priest says, and we may say it with him and for him and ourselves in our hearts:

Cleanse my heart and my lips, O almighty God, who didst cleanse the lips of the prophet Isaias with a burning coal: vouchsafe through thy gracious mercy so to cleanse me that I may worthily proclaim thy holy gospel.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This vision of Isaias (Ch. 6) is the source too of a later part of the words of the Mass.

The prophet is praying in the temple before the altar when he sees God himself surrounded by the first among the choirs of angels, the seraphim. These are the angels that are nearest to God in the celestial hierarchy. They 'excel in what is the supreme excellence of all, in being united to God himself' (*Summa I*, 108, 6). According to the interpretation of Dionysius, their name means light and heat, and shows their burning love for God; the ardour, intensity and irresistible force with which they lift and transfigure all creatures, angels or men, that are below them, kindling them with that same living fire of love by which they are themselves consumed, purifying them and transmitting to them the light which dispels all gloom and darkness. The live coal with which the angel in Isaias's vision touches the lips of the prophet is symbolical of the seraphim's nature and mission. The coal was kept there for burning the incense that was to be either offered by itself at the altar of incense, or to hallow and purify the victim, the burnt-offering that the priest offered to God for sins. When the prophet was touched with the coal it was as though he himself were to be made pure and clean as the victim, his sins were to be consumed in the sight of God by being given a share in the burning purity of the seraphim. For how can he, a sinful man, belonging to a fallen race and a sinful nation, live, having seen the glory of God, and how can he be made ready to tell others of his vision?

The gospel which the priest reads every day at the Mass

gives us a vision of the living God, of his words and deeds when he became flesh and dwelt amongst us. We need, and we pray for the purity of heart and mind that sees God; and like the seraphim we need to be translucent to his light and love so as to put no obstacle in his way when his light and warmth want to shine through us upon others, proclaiming his holy gospel. That is what the prayer means, that being cleansed and afire with love, we may be ready to say with Isaias: 'Here am I. Send me', when God asks: 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?'

At high Mass the priest asks God to bless the incense: 'through the intercession of blessed Michael, the archangel, standing at the right hand of the altar of incense', and then the bread and wine, the crucifix and the altar, finally the priest and we ourselves as sharing in his priesthood before God, are incensed, to show our willingness to offer ourselves to God with our Lord. According to a commonly accepted opinion, the archangels belong to the third and last order of angels (principalities, archangels and angels), who are charged with the actual execution of the work inspired by God, lovingly contemplated by the first order of angels, disposed according to its universal causes by the second order, and finally applied to particular effects by the third. Angels look after ordinary human beings, archangels look after important ones charged with some great task, or upon some special occasion. They announce great things. Thus it was the archangel Gabriel who went to the city of Galilee, and whom before that, the priest Zachary had found standing at the right hand of the altar of incense, waiting to tell him of the coming birth of his son, St John the Baptist. At Mass, St Michael, the prince of the heavenly host, stands at the altar ready to repel and defeat Satan once more by virtue of the sacrifice of the second Adam; and ready to carry on high the incense that rises as a sign of our own sacrifice and self-offering to God, or as an emblem of prayer, ascending to God from a heart on fire with love for him. Incense is consumed by fire, changed into an ethereal substance; it signifies our spiritualisation by means of the fire and the death of sacrifice, at Mass, at every moment of our lives. And at this the angels of God preside. [To be concluded.]

THE FRIENDS OF ANGELS

MARY ANGELA JEEVES

ST Thomas reminds us of the following words of St Bernard: 'The first and chiefest contemplation is the marvelling of God's majesty'. We learn from St Ambrose that 'Glory is the shining Fact praised', and that the splendour of the Holy Trinity is the glory of God in himself. It therefore follows that man's end of life, which is the rendering of glory to God, is at once the most beneficial mode of ministering to his own happiness—and that of all others, since his relationship to God involves his relationship with all other men—and the greatest act of friendship he can render to his Creator. 'Charity', says St Thomas, 'inspires the soul with a sovereign love of him, who is supremely the object of love.' (Cf. St Thomas, *Q. Disp. de Boet. in Comm.*, a. 12.) He says also that 'Charity is friendship of man with God founded upon the fellowship of everlasting happiness', and also that 'Charity is friendship between man and God'. (II-II, 23, 1.) Christ who is God said to his disciples: 'Abide in my love' (John 15, 9) and 'I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends'. (Id. 15.) He extended his invitation to mystical union still further: as the cells to the body, as the branches to the vine, so are the children of the Church likened in their intimate union with the Word made flesh; but he who came to restore to us the power to share in the divine nature, which we had lost by the fall of our first parents, also prayed: 'That they may be one, as thou, Father in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us.' (id. 16, 11 & 21.)

No truer act of charity can be conceived of than to help each other to attain so glorious an end as intimate union with the all-beautiful and all-wise: the Uncreated . . . with him who is perfect love. St Thomas expressly teaches that 'since the saints after death see the Word, the intercession of the heavenly hierarchy is of the utmost value to man', and Christ himself has taught us that 'there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance'. (Luke 15, 10.)

'When it is a question of dispensing the mysteries of God, then one angel can teach another by clarifying, illumining, and perfecting. And in this sense the angels do in some sort share in the active life as long as this world lasts, for they are occupied in ministering to the inferior creation.' Now the holy angels, having once been tested, possess for ever the supreme joy of the beatific vision, and they cry: 'Amen: Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving and honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever, Amen.' (Apoc. 7, 12.) Communion with these holy adorers of the Blessed Trinity will surely serve to initiate us ever more deeply and fully in that 'clear knowledge of God with praise'—which is glory. Only one created being can be excepted when we affirm that the holy and angelic host are, of all God's creations, most able profoundly to influence our minds and hearts to move towards that heaven on earth with is communion with the very source of joy—the Blessed Trinity.

'Theologians agree that our Lady, since she is the Mother of the Incarnate Word, immeasurably exceeds by her grace, and therefore by her glory also (since glory in heaven is the fruit of grace on earth) the glory of all angels together.' (*O Felix Culpa*, by Dom B. Webb, o.s.b.)

We have seen that to give glory to God is the highest act of love man can perform towards him, and it therefore follows that the highest acts of love that men and angels can perform for one another is to teach this sublimest art of how to give glory to God through 'the shining Fact praised'.

What is love? We tend, as human beings, to find difficulty in disentangling the idea of love from something inextricably bound up with the senses, with which, however, love in essence has no necessary connection; that is to say, God is Spirit, and God is love, and angels are spirits whose sole functions, in direct service of God, are thinking and willing, or knowing and loving; yet, as God, they have 'no passions, parts or feelings'. Far from being cold in their loving, however, they are spoken of in Scripture as flames of fire (Heb. 1, 7), and the highest choirs of all are referred to even by poets as 'burning seraphim', 'flaming spirits of God'. Although the angels, above all the cherubim and seraphim,

'are not fiery substances' since they are pure spirit, 'fire well expresses the light of (their) knowledge and the fervour of (their) love'. (Hussein, s.j. *The Spirit World About Us*.) Père Boudon in his *Devotion to the Nine Choirs of Angels* tells us that 'St Denis, who wrote so lovingly of them, delights in assuming the title of *Philangelus*, that is to say, "The Friend of Angels".' A year or two ago a campaign was started of *Philangeli*, or 'Friends of Angels', with the object of marshalling by prayer and invocation *all* the holy angels against *all* the 'principalities and powers of darkness and spirits of wickedness in high places' (Ephes. 6, 12). Persecutors of the early Church, such as Nero and Diocletian, are outstripped by the enemies of the Church in our times: they were, in any case, ignorant pagans, whereas diabolically engendered mental and physical torments are perpetrated by those who have, in knowledge, been christianised. We have only to study both Old and New Testament accounts of angelic intervention in the affairs of men to realise that angels will often deal more emphatically with the enemies of God than Christian penitents might dare to do.

The *Philangeli* campaign, however, is not being set in motion only to call up reinforcements to assist in our wrestling against the devil and his legions; the swiftest way of overcoming evil is the wielding of the invincible weapon of love. 'Love is strong as death', whereas 'jealousy is hard as hell'. (*Canticles*.) It is beyond shadow of doubt that communion with the 'holy and angelic host' cannot fail to deepen our interior life, quicken our spiritual apprehensions, purify our senses, clarify our knowledge and strengthen our fidelity of purpose; leading us eventually to what has been described as 'that pure act . . . or complete adoration "too full for sound or foam".' We cannot expect the two highest choirs who are occupied with perpetual adoration of the blessed Trinity to engage in such reassuringly homely interludes as the superintending of Daniel's dinner by the simple process of transporting Habacuc by the hair of his head. Nor will the cherubim and seraphim participate in the charmingly domestic details, such as the journey of Tobias, the wedding of Sarah, the extracting of the gall of the fish that healed Tobias's blindness, and the incitement of the household dog

joyously to wag his tail—in all of which the great Archangel Raphael became so delightfully involved at God's behest. We can, however, strive to unite our prayers before the blessed Sacrament with the adoration of the cherubim and seraphim before the blessed Trinity. It is said that an angel taught the following prayer to the children of Fatima at our Lady's command: 'O my God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love you; I beg pardon for all those who do not believe, nor adore, nor hope, nor love you'. Or again, they were to begin with: 'Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore you profoundly . . .', and then they were to offer the blessed Sacrament present in all the tabernacles of the world praise in reparation for sin and the conversion of sinners.

A selection of prayers will be found in the *Philangeli* leaflet from which lay members are asked to choose one only, to offer daily for the intentions of the campaign: (a) the conversion of the world and the reign of Christ the King, with the help of all the holy angels; (b) the intentions of all the *Philangeli* for one another. Priests are not asked for vocal prayers, but for a *memento* for the above intentions in their daily Masses. Religious are asked for a daily intention for *Philangeli* in unison with some prayer that they already say. *Philangeli* have also a custom, though not a rule, of greeting the guardian angels of all whom they meet during each day.

Objections may be raised such as: 'I pray daily to my guardian angel already. Nothing more is needed.' Just as the Catholic and Universal Church has always encouraged the faithful to think in terms not only of 'God and my soul' but of 'God and my neighbour, and *all* mankind', so some may begin to feel the need of being more drawn to think in terms of 'the guardian angels of the universe, and everyone in it', rather than only of 'me and my guardian angel'.

Again, some may say: 'I go straight to God'. But Christ made use of the ministry of angels throughout his earthly life, from birth to death, in joy and mental agony, in fasting and temptation, in desertion and in triumph. He does so still in the life of his mystical body the Church: St Michael is called on to offer the incense of worship, in the Mass, and

the angelic chorus join the chorus of praise in the *Gloria in excelsis* and in the *Sanctus*. We can hardly afford to ignore the use of angels, since Christ did not dispense with them either in his sacred humanity or in his mystical body the Church.

It may be urged that there are so many associations. *Philangeli*, however, aims at mustering by prayer the nine choirs of angels, including *all* the guardian angels of *all* the orders, societies, associations, countries, provinces, etc., throughout the world. Actually this is not an association as yet. It is for new members to help to increase our numbers sufficiently to enable us to apply for recognition to the Holy Father. Thus far H.E. Cardinal Griffin has permitted our prayers on the leaflet for private use. Dominican Tertiaries should be specially attracted, it would seem, as 'Dogs of the Lord', bearing it in mind that the Third Order of St Dominic used to be called 'the Militia of Jesus Christ'. Many Tertiaries have joined the campaign. There is a committee; Fr Provincial, s.d.s., is President, Canon Arendzen chaplain, Fr Antoninus Maguire, o.p., Fr Clement Tigar, s.j., and Fr Xavier Howard, s.d.s., councillors. The Vice-President is Mrs Margaret Catherine Tyrer. *Philangeli* began with two members, but it quickly blossomed like the vine, and has now become a world movement, since it has touched all five continents.

The shortest prayer on the leaflet is one that even the busiest Catholic will scarcely wish to omit from his daily devotions. It is the indulgenced Angelic Trisagion:

'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts:

All earth is full of thy glory.

Glory be to the Father; glory be to the Son; glory be to the Holy Ghost.'

Intending members are welcome with or without offerings, but will they please send stamps to cover postage, and other expenses of *Philangeli*, to:

Miss Mary Angela Jeeves, Hon. Gen. Sec.,
Convent of Our Lady of Lourdes,
Oxhey Lane,
Hatch End, Middlesex.

THE MYSTERY AND 'THE MYSTERIES'

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

AS October, the month of the Rosary, is here, our thoughts may well turn to the consideration of the position of our Blessed Lady in the life of the Church as a whole and in our own. In some minds this consideration arouses misgivings. Does the trend of modern Mariology tend to give her an exaggerated prominence, they ask? This fear is almost as old as heresy, yet it troubles even devout Catholics today. Are popular forms of devotion to our Lady such as the Family Rosary, Perpetual Novenas, the Fatima cultus, being used as escapes from the basic obligations of religion, leading away from God and not to him? Does the widespread de Montfort consecration with its stress on 'All through Mary' conflict with a spirituality which seeks to centre everything on the Mass? Isn't the use of the Rosary at Mass an obstacle to the spread of the liturgical spirit through a wider use of the Missal? Queries such as these may be only academic difficulties of the theorists. But they can also be genuine anxieties to pious souls to whom they present themselves in a practical and sometimes an acute form. They may be solved from various angles. Here we will merely suggest that the Rosary, so often the bone of contention, can prove the means of reconciliation both in theory and in practice; and that at what might be regarded as the heart of the matter, viz. the relation of the Rosary to the Mass.

To take this line is only to follow the lead given by the Popes. Leo XIII ordered the daily recitation of the Rosary during October either in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or during Mass, and this decree has not been rescinded by his liturgically-minded successors. In his Encyclical on the Liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius warmly encourages the use of the Missal, dialogue Masses and the like, as ways of enabling the faithful to take a more intelligent and active part in the Mass. But he goes on to say that such methods do not suit everyone, nor even the same people at all times, and that it is possible to achieve the same end

'in ways which many may find easier; for example, by devoutly meditating on the mysteries of Jesus Christ, or by performing other religious exercises and saying other prayers which, though different in form from liturgical prayers, are by their nature in keeping with them'. (M.D., 115.) Although the Rosary is not explicitly mentioned here, it clearly satisfies the conditions laid down. After such authoritative guidance who would make bold to suggest that there is any fundamental incompatibility between the forms of devotion and worship typified by the Rosary and the Mass? Rather should we set out to make plain the extent of their harmony and the way in which the one can serve to supplement the other and make it more fruitful.

In the Rosary the recitation of set vocal prayers is combined with meditation on certain events in our Lord's life. As a whole this does not form part of the Liturgy, yet each single prayer is found either in the Divine Office or the Mass itself. The mysteries which are considered are all incidents from the life, death, and resurrection of Christ which are also unfolded before us in the course of the Liturgical Year, and many of which are recalled in the Mass. But there is a difference. They are called 'mysteries' because the external, historical events enshrine and show forth a spiritual reality in such a way that 'each of them is, according to its nature and in its own way, the cause of our salvation'. (M.D., 176.) In the Rosary we recall these incidents to our minds, striving so far as in us lies to 'imitate what they contain' so as to 'obtain what they promise'. It might remain a cold and lifeless representation of past events, a subjective recollection. But in the Liturgy, on the other hand, the inner spiritual reality is made objectively present as the source of the grace which it represents and is intended to reproduce in us. Thus, far from there being any incompatibility between the Rosary and the Liturgy, they are identical in their 'subject matter' and complementary in their approach to it. The one promises and prepares for what the other produces, largely in the measure of our preparedness. St Gregory Nazienzen once told his congregation: 'We cannot offer a gift more pleasing to God than to offer ourselves with a perfect understanding of the Mystery'. Many persons

may find it easier to reach such an understanding of the mysteries of the Liturgy by meditating on them in the Rosary than by the use of the Missal and the Breviary, though those for whom both methods are possible will tell you how the one wonderfully illuminates and implements the other. The texts of the Mass and Office will often throw new light on some familiar scene from the Rosary, while the remembrance of the historical setting of a feast and its place in our Lord's life may serve to make plain the application which the Liturgy makes to our own. What is essential is that we should 'come into contact with his mysteries and, so to speak, live by them' (M.D., 176). The form of prayer which most helps us towards this is the best for us.

Although we speak of the 'mysteries' of Christ's life, they are, in a sense, only one, the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation. This is God's great 'Deed', of which Mother Julian speaks, planned from all eternity and only to be completed with the end of time. In the divine plan the Son of God and his Mother are necessarily and inseparably united. God became man in order that we might be redeemed and so that the merits of his human life should be the source of the sanctification of our own. Those merits were to be made available to us by his sacrificial death on the Cross and applied to us through the Mass which is the essence of Calvary's sacrifice perpetuated in our midst. Thus his life on earth and life in his Mystical Body, his sacrifice on the Cross and in the Mass, the meriting and the application of our redemption, are but different phases of the same process, various aspects of the one work. And as our Blessed Lady was vitally involved in the one, it is impossible for her to be separated from him in the other.

In the stories of our Lord's infancy we repeatedly read: 'They found the Child with his mother'. He *needed* her. Humanly speaking he could not have existed without her. On Calvary she stood by his Cross, not just as a spectator or a sympathiser but as an actor, playing a part in the drama, second only to his own. Before he could die, he had to be born, and he had asked her consent before becoming incarnate in her womb. While the angel awaited her *Fiat*, the fate of the human race hung in the balance. Had she refused

it, the redemption as God had planned it could not have taken place. By her acquiescence she became a subordinate but necessary agent in the whole process of redemption, a secondary but universal source of every grace which should be given to men. Her Son's dependence on her and submission to her throughout his earthly life, have a parallel relationship in the life of grace which continues for all eternity. If the mysteries of the Rosary are meditated from this point of view, it will become clear how our Blessed Lady is intimately involved in the whole liturgy, and how all genuine devotion to her *must* bring us nearer to her Son and make us ready to receive the graces of the liturgy which we owe to her as well as to him.

The same holds good as regards the Mass in particular. It is no 'distraction' to be thinking of our Lady or praying to her during the Holy Sacrifice. As she stood on Calvary, so must she be spiritually present wherever the Mass is offered. Her part in the Sacrifice is the same now as then. Jesus is her Son as well as God's and she has rights over him. As his Mother, she delivered him for us really and freely in union with his Father in heaven. In union with Christ himself she offered for our salvation the life she had given him, the body and blood which had been formed from her substance and which she had carried in her womb. Above all, she was one with him in the inner offering which this sacrifice expressed and which remains the same in the Mass though the outward expression is changed. Man had sinned by an act of refusal and rebellion, the refusal to accept his dependence on God his Creator and rebellion against his command. It was the denial of the obedience and worship which he owes and which God insists he shall give. The redemption was to be effected by the reversal of this act; by God becoming man, accepting the condition of the sinful creature, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. It was by this final act of obedience and worship that man would be effectively redeemed, but every act of Christ's life from the first moment of his Incarnation was an expression of obedience to his Father's will, the worship of God through the willing acceptance of all that the position of creature involves. And in all this his Mother's life

was only the echo of his own. Her: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to thy word', completely sums up the attitude of man in the face of his Creator. That attitude is the essential feature of all worship and sacrifice, of Christ's, our Lady's and ours. That is what sharing in the Mass really means. Not just following the prayers in the Missal or even joining in the chant, but uniting ourselves 'closely and of set purpose with the High Priest and his minister on earth . . . offering ourselves as a spiritual victim . . . in union with our divine Head crucified' (cf. M.D., 110, 105). On the Cross our Lord suffered for us and in our place, while in her willing co-operation in the Incarnation and the Redemption our Blessed Lady spoke in our name and represented us all. Now it is for us freely to ratify what they did on our behalf. We shall not find a surer way of doing this than to echo our Lady's *Fiat* by our loving acceptance of God's will in all the details of our life, and by that obedience to his law which Fr Martindale has aptly called 'worship in the sphere of behaviour'. Then the Mass will be for us, as Calvary was for her, only the culmination and final consecration of a life wholly offered to God in union with the sacrifice of his Son.

Here again the Rosary can be an immense help. The complete cycle of its mysteries can be seen in terms of the one mystery of the redemptive Incarnation; of the preparation for Christ's sacrifice, its actual realisation, and its reward and consummation in the glory of heaven, already enjoyed in soul and body by Jesus and Mary and held in store for us all. By pondering on our Lady's share in this sacrifice, we shall come to understand the part she still plays in the application of its merits and the nature of the co-operation which is demanded of us. Meditation on the historical details of Calvary can bring home to us what sharing in the Mass means. The mere physical presence which the Church imposes in fulfilment of the obligation is not enough. The bad thief hung close to Christ in his agony, but he was not promised Paradise as was his repentant companion. There were many spectators who never dreamt that it was God who was dying, and dying for them. Even Christ's friends who were full of grief and sympathy had no understanding of

what was at stake. They were united to Christ's sacrifice by a virtual intention and so shared in its merits, but they did not do so deliberately and consciously. Only his Mother understood all and deliberately willed and shared in his offering. If the place of the Mass in our lives is to be what God intends, she, and no one less, must be our model.

One final point. We have spoken of acquiescence, acceptance, obedience. These must not be understood to imply passivity in the sense of inaction. Rather they imply receptivity, open-ness to God's action, that docility which is the essence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Once we surrender to God, he can use us, act through us. Our Lady's *Fiat* resulted in the Incarnation and her becoming Mother of God. Through our Lord's submission to the death of the Cross our redemption was effected. Our Lady's compassion made her Mother of all men. The Mass has been called the highest act of contemplation. It is also the most powerful form of apostolate. It is only to the degree that our selves and our lives are given over to God in union with our Lord in the Mass that our work for souls will bear fruit. We must humbly offer ourselves as God's servants, as Mary did, before he will make us partners in his work.

Lourdes, Fatima, Consecrations to our Blessed Lady, the Angelus, the Rosary and the rest: all these devotions lead to and are fulfilled in the Mass. Anything which really draws us closer to Mary will end by bringing us to her side at the foot of the Cross. But of them all the Rosary is surely the most comprehensive and the most precious. Educative in the truest sense of the word, it leads the mind to understand and the will to embrace the inner truth of the mysteries which it contemplates and which the Mass and the Liturgy fulfil. The Mass attended in the spirit of the Rosary and the Rosary prayed in the spirit of the Mass would do much towards bringing about what the Holy Father says should be the aim of the people's participation in the Liturgy in any form: 'that the souls of those present be united as closely as possible to the divine Redeemer, that their lives may become holier and holier, and the glory of the heavenly Father be ever increased.' (M.D., 118.)

WHO ART IN HEAVEN

A RETREAT BY R. H. J. STEUART, S.J.

WHO art in Heaven.' This is a puzzling expression. Where is Heaven, and how can God be fixed in Heaven or anywhere at all? In old days people really did think that there was a hard-and-fast place in the universe above us. They thought that the sky was a solid dome, a firmament, and that there was water above and below, and that the water poised above the dome of the sky was allowed to descend. They used the expressions of their day. It is the natural instinct in man to look up to God as if he were poised actually, physically above us.

When we talk of Heaven, the Church does not mean us to believe that God is enthroned in one particular place above. God is everywhere in a sense that cannot be described in terms of our experience. Some writer has said that the existence of God is like a circle: the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. Or take Christ in the Host: he is in it all, in each part; even if it is broken, you don't break Christ. He is not 'in' things in the sense that we are in them —'in' the chapel, for instance. God is everywhere, but men cannot be everywhere. Our being is a totally different being from God's being. We cannot imagine that state of being, we are not furnished with anything that enables us to understand it. Therefore the words 'in Heaven' refer to our relation with God. They imply that he is above; not locally, in measurement, but above us in his nature. Heaven is a state of existence where we shall see God as he is, where we shall be when 'the dawn breaks and the shadows flee away'.

So we think of God as above us, one who has to be looked up to; 'the raising of the mind and heart to God'. What is this raising up?

The Church teaches as of faith that God made this race of man with a double nature so that we can be raised up to know and see him, without, as it were, arguing from the senses. Our first parents had that, but they lost it. Man could never be simply pure human being again. He's had it and lost it and there's a defect in him.

God having once raised the human race to that state when man could see and commune with him, there was left a yearning towards him. We should all find, looking back, periods when we were utterly emptied; an almost physical void, which was our unfallen nature striving to get back to God. Can we then see God directly? Not of our own effort, no; when man lost the high level he lost that which went with it. But it is deep within us now that we are restored to the supernatural life. The faculty was there but it could not be used, it was like an engine without water in the boiler. And then, when through Christ the supernatural level was restored, it began to work again. In saints, contemplatives, the faculty of our first parents began to recover itself. Contemplation is really part of our equipment, so that anyone who achieves sanctity, a heroic level of life, must have this faculty of contemplation.

My point is, however humble and commonplace I may be, there is within me a yearning restlessness—a faculty for this contemplation. God, who has made me for himself, and endowed me, as head of created things, with free-will, is trying to raise me up to it with every means short of compelling that free-will. This faculty of entering into direct contact with God is buried within me, not extinct. There is within us, even if we don't know it, an urge towards God.

Supposing I am beginning to be dimly aware of that? What is my reaction? Prayer, the 'lifting up'. The inevitable result is to move me on. In life one finds interests, preoccupations, engrossments—but not for long. We find it all temporary, we can hold on to nothing. Our intellect tells us that, and it is part of my urge to prayer. So when our Lord said, 'Our Father who art in heaven', it was an indication that we should raise ourselves above all that. The whole content of Christ's teaching is directed to that one object, to teach us how to pray: to bring us into direct relationship with God.

That is what the Apostles meant when they said, 'Teach us to pray'. So people who look at prayer as one of the details of the spiritual life are missing the whole point. Rather, spiritual life is one of the details of prayer. That immense apparatus of truth, spiritual aid, the Church, exists in order

to put us into contact with God, to bring us to reality. We have to become sick of appearances and want reality, truth.

Children are so direct with God. They have an unspoiled, uncorrupted way of speaking to God. Our Lord was, for that reason, so furious at the thought of someone cutting that short, checking it, corrupting or bringing sin into the life of a child. 'It would be far better for him that a mill-stone were hung about his neck.' Why?—because children are so direct with God. Theirs is a sure, unperverted thrust towards the real which they accept quite naturally. Shades of the prison house begin to close in on the child, new interests, new ways of looking at things, instead of this beautiful unconscious urge towards God. Here were these children going straight to God and somebody has turned them aside.

So we want to speak to God in quite a simple way, and we must let that grow; it must be nourished. The first infantile expression won't suit us as we develop. Either we must improve upon that or it will die away, and there will be no chance of growth ever. That is why religious education is so necessary. We want to know more about God; there is no knowledge worth anything in comparison with him. However much you want to know other things, by comparison with him they are worthless. Didn't our Lord say we have got to be as little children, and that God seemed to hide himself from learned people? But all he meant, I think, was a method of approach. The children's knowledge added to the natural turning towards God has got to be developed according to our human nature, and that brings us to the other form of prayer we call meditation, which is the spiritual method of advancing in my knowledge of God by the use of my intellect.

His goodness—that he loves me—that I ought to, can, love him—what he demands of me: these are things which I must think out for myself. I need this knowledge of God but I don't know that I need it.

The action of evil spirits is to get us to be satisfied with other things. If we are, you come across withered, unsanctified lives, waiting for—what?

Prayer is the satisfaction of the most urgent instinct we

have even though we don't know it. 'Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.' I suppose the saints used to wonder how it is that anyone could not realise it.

Prayer is not a luxury. Prayer is not a pious practice. Prayer is not just one of the tools on our bench, so to speak. It is the expression of a right relationship with God. And the fact that very few are conscious of it is our fault. There is in our power this tremendous force of prayer.

The Holy Spirit prays within us. The Patron of prayer is the Holy Spirit. You can't say that prayer is out of your reach, not your line of country, because you've got the Holy Ghost within you.

Therefore, when our Lord said, '*Our Father who are in Heaven*', it was that we should raise our minds to him, upwards from the material world in which we are immersed.



POINTS OF VIEW

HERE is one mildly disquieting note in Fr Oswin Magrath's excellent 'Hermits' in the April LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, as in the October, 1952, *La Vie Spirituelle*. That is the idea that the lack of mention of hermits in the Code of Canon Law is somehow a deplorable omission. May it not be, on the contrary, a Providential disposition? For priests and religious, status and a social milieu are part of their vocation: the Code provides for them. For hermits, as Fr Magrath admirably shows, status and any special human milieu are excluded by their vocation: by its very silence, the Code provides for that. Let us keep it so.

SOLITARIUS

SUPPLYING THE CEREMONIES OF BAPTISM

WHEN a person has been privately baptised *in periculo*, he is brought to a church in order that the ceremonies omitted in the private baptism may be performed. This is commonly done in the case of infants.

Some such rite is very proper. It expresses, I suppose, the 'formal' or public introduction of the new member to the Christian community, which he has already privately joined. It would be unjust to deprive the baptised child of any benefit which may come to him through the unctions; he has a right to his salt, his white robe and his taper.

But I plead that consideration be given to the manner of performing this rite; for at present the reality is grievously misrepresented and obscured.

Here comes a baptised Christian, strong in his unsullied innocence. He has but recently escaped the peril of death. His parents, his friends are rejoicing and thankful. The Church rejoices with them.

Why, then, is this Christian stopped at the church door? Why is the priest's stole of violet hue? And what conceivable purpose is there in the repeated exorcisms? Devils there are in plenty, and possessive in the extreme; but surely the one person wholly safe from them is a newly-baptised baby? He is the 'strong man armed' indeed!

Should not the rite begin with rejoicing and thanksgiving? *Baptizatus est—Alleluia, Alleluia; Deo gratias—Alleluia, Alleluia.* The *Gloria in excelsis* would not be out of place. Let the first entry of the newly baptised be a triumphant procession to the altar-rails, and there, not at the font, let him receive the salt, the unctions, the robe and the taper.

Such a rite would have meaning and purpose: it would reveal, not obscure, the essential dignity of baptism. And to many parents it would be an occasion of thanksgiving for a deliverance from death of their child.

May those who have the privilege of approaching the Sacred Congregation of Rites consider this matter.

IDDESLEIGH

THE RETURN OF SYMBOLS

AN INTRODUCTION TO 'THE WATER AND THE FIRE'¹

DONALD NICHOLL

THOSE chosen to judge the 'Political Prisoner' competition in London disagreed about the respective merits of the different entries. But on one point they were unanimous: that merely factual models (of prisoners looking out from behind barbed wire, for instance) are quite inadequate; and that *only something symbolic is capable of representing the reality of the political prisoner situation*. Their insistence that it requires a symbol, not a mere photographic reproduction or sign, to re-present reality is but one example of that search for adequate symbols in which the most sensitive minds of our times are engaged. The number of those engaged in this search, and the intensity of their efforts, is easily under-estimated because the persons concerned do not fall into the customary political, religious or artistic categories; and so one fails to observe what they have in common until one becomes aware oneself of the search that is on.

The emptiness caused by our desperate lack of symbols has been ably discussed by Eric Heller in *The Disinherited Mind*, whilst a most moving description of a person returning to symbols is contained in Edwin Muir's autobiography, *The Story and the Fable*. And on an *Odyssey* similar to Muir's Colonel Van der Post (*Venture to the Interior*) made a similar discovery, though in his case one is inclined to say that it was the symbols which re-discovered him. Even a geologist has felt the need, for Jacquetta Hawkes's *A Land* is inspired by it; moreover, it is significant that she should acknowledge her debt to the symbolist sculptor Henry Moore. As one might expect, the most compelling statement of this movement comes from a poet: David Jones has gathered into his work, *The Anathemata*, all that rich heritage of his own which is held together, and holds him together, in the Mass.

'That which holds together all things living' was the definition given by Freud of the driving-force in the universe, *libido*, 'the Eros of poets and philosophers'. Unwittingly he was attributing to Eros the function which Christians attribute to their Creed—the *symbolon*—a word which in its Greek root means 'holding together'. And it is precisely because symbols have this function that they are so difficult to talk about, so that a person who is aware of them and talks to a person unaware of them feels as if he were describing the beauty of the sky to a blind person. For whereas the function of particular things (such as cats, men and electrical

¹ 'The Water and the Fire', by Gerald Vann, o.p. (Collins, pp. 187; 12s. 6d.)

currents) can be demonstrated—by isolating them, seeing what happens when they are taken away, and hence inferring their function when present—it is not possible to do this with symbols. You cannot, that is to say, take some isolated effect and attribute it to the symbol, for the simple reason that the symbol holds the whole system of effects and things together; and to try to isolate its effect would be like trying to isolate 'togetherness'. This explains why it is so difficult to talk about that which holds a human being together—the soul—or about that which holds all things together—God. You cannot point to the effects of the soul or of God in the same way as you can point at the claw-marks of a cat or be shocked by an electric current. All you can do for a sceptic is to show him that a human being is held together, and then ask him whether the *whole* thing (human being, universe, etc.) would not look quite different if there were no symbol holding it all together.

If we are indebted to Freud for clarifying one function of the symbol it is from Jung that we learn another of its functions—though a profound examination would reveal their connection. Jung tells us that the symbol 'represents the inexpressible in an unsurpassable way'; and in the light of this definition it becomes easy to see the sense in which the Mass is a symbol. For the Mass renders God present to us in an unsurpassable way; in other words, it is the symbol which communicates God to us. And this function of communication needs to be given more stress than Jung gives it, because it emphasises the reality of what is being made present or communicated. So long as symbols, or words, are simply regarded as expressive the operation in which they are used can be enclosed within the mind of the person using them—there is no necessary relationship to an *other*, as other. But the truth of the matter is that words, or symbols are perfected not in expression but in communication—which necessarily involves relationship to an other. And it is significant that persons suffering from certain types of mental illness, in which the higher functions are blocked, lose this capacity for symbolic communication. They retain the capacity to use words as tools for expression but lose the ability to symbolise things, for communication, with words.²

This inability to communicate by means of symbols has nowadays become the basis of a philosophical cult, the cult of positivism. Adherents of this philosophy devote their energies to showing that the moving and mysterious situations traditionally represented by symbols are really quite prosaic and everyday, and that we do not experience them as moving and mysterious once we eliminate symbols and replace them by everyday

² This is the theme of Kurt Goldstein in his *Human Nature in the Light of Psychopathology*; and the Professor of Psychophysiology at Paris, Professor Soulairac, confirms this viewpoint: 'it is the symbolic function which constitutes the essential difference between the human and the subhuman act'. (*Limites de l'humain*, p. 118.)

words. What the positivists fail to see is that these symbols, far from falsifying experience, are the very means by which human beings have deepened and widened their experience; the symbols invoked by the poets, for instance, are not decorative additions to primitive, simple experience, but the means by which we gain fresh experiences and deeper insight into the human situation. In other words, though it is possible for a human being to try to make life prosaic and everyday by reducing words to the status of tools and himself to the status of a tool-using instrument, this is contrary to the function of words and contrary to his own nature. For it is the process of conceiving words and symbols to express a situation which itself sharpens our insight into that situation—and this is especially true of the making of poetry.³ Unless this is the case Dante's attempt in the *Divine Comedy* to represent the man-woman situation is a hopeless failure as compared with statistician Kinsey's observations on the sexual behaviour of Americans.

However, although inability to communicate is now fashionable, human beings will not long be daunted from attempting it; and a much more serious *malaise* is the widespread feeling that nothing is holding the universe together any longer, that an atomic bomb is sufficient to blow it all to pieces. It should be obvious from our argument that this feeling is due to our loss of symbols, and that the atomic bomb would be utterly innocuous apart from this feeling—which is itself likely to touch the bomb off. At the same time a quotation from one who has done so much to influence the contemporary mentality will make the point clearer: 'A frightful queerness has come into life. Hitherto events have been held together by a certain logical consistency as the heavenly bodies have been held together by the golden cord of gravitation. Now it is as if the cord had vanished and everything is driven anyhow, anywhere at a steadily increasing velocity. . . . The writer is convinced that there is no way out, or around, or through the impasse. It is the end.' (H. G. Wells. *Mind at the End of its Tether*.)

In order to understand why so many human beings are in this *impasse* one would have to investigate the break-up of the European mind from the time when it ceased to be held together by the supreme symbol, the Mass. Such an investigation would reveal how the essential concern of Protestantism, the Enlightenment, Liberalism and Marxism has been the effort to use some fragment of the broken symbol as a standard for all human activity. By trying to force the part to enclose the whole these

³ Though the making of scientific theory, also, is just as likely to come to an end unless the symbolic function of the human mind is again recognised. Every major scientific discovery has been initiated by some great scientist giving his mind room for symbolising and 'myth'-making; once the great scientist has deepened our insight it has then been possible for the technicians to come along and exploit its riches.

sects have produced monotony—in the strict sense—they are only able to hear one note amidst all the vast symphony of the universe.⁴ Nor has this scourge of tone-deafness, this inability to hear the symphonic background, left Catholics unscathed. The censors who altered the text of Dante's *Vita Nuova* soon after the Council of Trent were suffering from it; they expunged the word *beata* as applied to Beatrice, changed the word *salute* to *quiete*, and in general, treated Dante's symbols as if they were sacrilegious. They, too, had fallen out of communion, and no longer felt themselves held together by the love that moves our hearts, the sun and the stars.

Valuable as such an historical investigation might be, however, for our understanding of what went wrong, this alone would not be sufficient to bring us back to a healthier condition. To do this we might well learn from the experience of the *kibbuz* in the newly-formed state of Israel. The members of the *kibbuz* were mainly agnostics; but when they were faced with the situation of bringing home the harvest they realised that you cannot bring in the harvest without some kind of ceremony; and so they spontaneously took to singing the Psalms as an accompaniment to the work. And from this contact with the earth, and the archetypal situation it presents, their ancient symbols again came to life, and many of the *kibbuz* returned to belief in God. It is by entering into such archetypal situations, rather than by theorising a great deal about them, that we shall find ourselves being held together, in communion with the reality of creatures in the Creator.

Yet in order to take stock of our position writing about symbols can be of service, and this is the service rendered to us by Fr Gerald Vann's latest book, *The Water and the Fire* (Collins. pp. 187; 12s. 6d.). In the space of eleven chapters he starts from our loss of symbols, and moves on through the recovery of symbols (the Hero-King, the Fire of Life, etc.) to the recovery of our communion with nature and each other. Those who have not already made this journey with Max Picard, Victor White, Gustave Thibon (to each of whom Fr Vann acknowledges his debt) will find the work particularly rewarding. It is written with that skill and command of quotation which has already gained for Fr Vann such a wide circle of readers; to them this book will need no other recommendation.

⁴ The conditions of these people was well summed up in a phrase first applied to Voltaire: 'His mind was a chaos of clear ideas'.

REVIEWS

WE SAW HER. By B. G. Sandhurst. With an Introduction by Fr C. C. Martindale, s.j. (Longmans; 12s. 6d.)

With the exception of an introductory section of forty pages and a brief final chapter of personal reminiscence, *We Saw Her* is made up of the evidence submitted by eye-witnesses and others who were living in or around Lourdes at the time of our Lady's appearance to Bernadette. The evidence was submitted to Père Cros (appointed by the Bishop of Tarbes as a one-man commission of enquiry) and published soon afterwards in his *Histoire de Notre Dame de Lourdes*. This is the first appearance of this evidence in English.

Fr Martindale, in an excellent introduction, points out the importance of this historical evidence even for us; I say *even* for us because normally the testimony of witnesses ceases to be of more than academic interest once a verdict is given—particularly a verdict so well established as is that of the Church on the cultus of our Lady associated with Lourdes. But, Fr Martindale points out, this is the evidence about the events that made Lourdes what it is, events which we are very liable to overlook. Still more important, it will help to revive the memory of Bernadette which time and the other, and later, associations of Lourdes have unfortunately tended to eclipse.

In an early chapter Mr Sandhurst points out the important part played by the reaction of the people of Lourdes in the making of Lourdes as we know it, since it was not the miracles as such but the fact that the Lourdais accepted them that mattered psychologically—the little seed that grew into a great tree. At first Bernadette was dismissed either as a fraud or as the victim of an unsound mind. Slowly at first and then with remarkable rapidity public opinion changed and in the course of time Bernadette was revered as a saint. What is to account for this changed outlook? What part did natural and supernatural forces play in bringing it about?

The answer to this question Mr Sandhurst believes can best be arrived at by way of the answers to three other questions:

1. How long a time elapsed between the apparitions and the Lourdais' change of heart?
2. What was the nature of the act of faith they made and what were the grounds for it?
3. In which direction did the reputation of Bernadette and her family tend to sway the balance?

It is with the evidence which provides us with the answers to these questions that the greater part of Mr Sandhurst's book is concerned. In arranging the verbatim extracts in logical order and linking them up with his own useful comments Mr Sandhurst has provided us with a most valuable addition to the vast literature of Lourdes and its cultus.

THOMAS HARPER

BARBE ACARIE: Wife and Mystic. By Lancelot C. Sheppard. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

Surprisingly little has been written about the fascinating Barbe Acarie. Yet who can portray her as she really was? Henri Brémont, lost in admiration, described her as 'de ces êtres achevés qui désespèrent les peintres'. For this remarkable woman, who lived the so-called *ordinary* life of a devoted wife and mother, was one of the outstanding religious figures of her day. Such men as Cardinal de Bérulle, Fr Coton, s.j., the King's confessor, Marillac the future Chancellor, St Francis de Sales, Ange de Joyeuse, and a host of others, prized her friendship, sought her advice, respected her and deferred to her continually; countless religious undertakings were planned at her house; and she herself, whose influence was so prodigious, was responsible for extensive monastic reforms, and is known to history as the 'true Mother and Foundress' of the Carmelite nuns in France.

Faced with such a life, the more timid of her biographers have hesitated: can a married woman be a great saint and mystic? . . . can an ordinary wife and mother do so much lasting good? And, hesitating, they missed the point, not realising that by their attitude, by falsifying the picture and painting her piously as a 'semi-nun' (contrary to evidence), they were unconsciously denying the sanctity of Christian marriage.

It is with gratitude, therefore, that we turn to Lancelot Sheppard's latest book, and to the masterly French biography by Fr Bruno, O.C.D., to find a true portrait of Barbe Acarie: a living portrait of one who was both 'wife and mystic', and who was to 'reach St Teresa's seventh mansion through the grace of the seventh sacrament'. 'Nowadays, her interest for us in this country', writes Mr Sheppard, 'is derived from the two great works of her life. She was a woman who achieved sanctity in marriage, who as a wife and mother of six children had to contend with difficulties greater than most, and who combined the role of Martha and Mary in a way that makes her life an example for all married women. Her other great work was the introduction of the Carmelite nuns to France.'

Mr Sheppard's fine study of these 'two great works' is written with insight and understanding; and his personal sympathy with Barbe Acarie and her husband, with the day-to-day problems of a home and

family, enriches the factual clarity of his style. His approach is thus essentially a human one; but it is also—and this must not be overlooked—the approach of an historian. The literary merits of the book must never make the reader forget the soundness of its historical structure which, when recording such a hotly disputed subject as Bérulle's dealings with the Carmelites, is of the utmost importance. The second half of the book is chiefly concerned with the coming of St Teresa's daughters to France and the subsequent developments, and it should appeal especially to the ever-growing number of people interested in Carmel. But in view of the criticism this part is likely to call forth, it is as well to stress here that Mr Sheppard is not writing as a 'controversialist'; he writes as an historian recording known facts; and when he proffers his personal opinion he does so after having studied a vast amount of material and, having weighed and sifted the evidence, he is in a position to give a balanced judgment. His conclusions, therefore, cannot be labelled 'prejudiced' and lightly dismissed. Is it too much to hope that all who are genuinely interested in the controversy will give these conclusions serious consideration?

The only real criticism concerns the dust-cover, not the book itself. An ethereal version of the frontispiece adorns the cover, and this suggests (contrary to the text) a very 'misty' conception of mysticism; also the last sentence of the blurb (though fully qualified in the Introduction to the book) is, as it stands, misleading.

One question alone remains. Readers who have long been familiar with the subject may find themselves asking: has Mr Sheppard over-simplified his picture of Barbe Acarie? Has he, by omitting many seemingly insignificant details, robbed her story of some of its poetry, lost some of that indefinable fragrance of the mystic consumed by the love of God?

Mr Sheppard has taken the line so often laid down in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* that saints are men and women, not just 'holy souls'. He has given us a very practical and vivid account of Barbe Acarie, presenting her to us as she must have appeared to many of her contemporaries and—leaving to theologians the more detailed discussions of her mysticism—he describes what she did and achieved: thus making known the tree by describing its fruit. The biography is especially opportune at the present day on account of its bearing on such subjects as the lay apostolate and the possibilities of contemplative life in the world; and it is even more urgently opportune in its stress on the sacramental aspect of marriage.

Here, in an exceptionally well-produced book, is the story of a most attractive and saintly woman, one to whom countless Carmelite convents are indebted. Both the author and the publisher are to be congratulated upon their achievement.

SAINTS Go WESTWARD. By Donald Attwater. (P. J. Kenedy and Sons; \$2.50.)

St Peter Claver said: 'A hungry man must be fed, not instructed'—and one of the most unforgettable of these sketches of American saints by Mr Attwater is of that 'slave of the Negroes' setting about the job. But times change. And now we are in danger of being fed by American dollars when we want more than anything instruction by American holiness. American saints! how important they are going to be for the whole world. Who are they in our own times, and what is the pattern of sanctity in their shiny mechanical world? Will they be found only in the new Trappist cloisters? on Rosary Crusade platforms? down in Harlem? Or shall we find them everywhere, Catholicly, up North and down South, round New York and far West, and in South America too? God knows, no man can say. Meantime, here are the pioneers, caught by Mr Attwater in a kind of gossip-column which makes us long to know all about them, and so much more than he tells us. They are all sorts, some twenty of them, revered, venerable, beatified or canonised, from North or South of the great continent, lay and clerical, married and nuns, Spanish, French, Italian, Indian, Negro, English—in a word, as American a collection as possible. And they are a very human lot, for though none of them, with the possible exception of Mother Cabrini, would be anything but amazed in America today; even in those days (for very different reasons) none of them could afford to be made of plaster or stained glass or dream material. Neither can saints in the American continent now. These are the saints of yesterday. But things have happened so fast over there that yesterday seems to have very little to do with today. Only, they challenge their successors. And that is a very good reason for Mr Attwater's having written this book for Americans, and for us to look over their shoulders as they read it, unless we may hope (as hope we do) for an English edition of our own.

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF ABBOT VONIER. Vol. III. (Burns Oates; 25s.)

In this final volume three books are brought together under the single title, *The Soul and the Spiritual Life*. The three books are, 'The Human Soul', 'Christianus', and 'The Life of the World to Come'. Broadly speaking they deal with the personality of the Christian. As Abbot Vonier remarks in Chapter 47 in his book on the Soul, many men 'are bound to the language and understanding of their childhood days, with the result that faith has become insipid to their mature minds'. And of an English agnostic it was said that 'the only Christianity he ever knew was the one he learned at the age of five'. This is so widely true at the present time that many would profit by reading these collected works.

A contrast is made between the power of holiness in the sanctified Christian and the inability of Satan and his angels to dwell in holiness. For the unclean spirit rest has become impossible—‘the earth’s surface burns the sole of his foot’. His only chance of repose is a sinful conscience. And so in ‘Christianus’ we read: ‘The periodical desecration or profanation of vast Christian lands becomes as simple in this explanation as the advance of a Napoleonic army. Satan wants to find rest, so he must destroy, if he can, every stronghold of holiness, be it a church spire, be it a crucifix by the wayside, a convent, a school of Christian truth, or a conscience that is in the grace of God. With such things confronting him on all sides Satan cannot rest.’

In the third book, those points of Christian doctrine are emphasised which strengthen hope of eternal happiness in the world to come.

The editor relates a delightful incident illustrating the Abbot’s reverence for the dignity of a human soul. One day whilst out walking he met a Catholic mother with her recently-born baby. Before and after speaking to her, quite naturally, he uncovered his head and bowed to the sleeping child.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

OBEDIENCE. (Blackfriars Publications; 16s. 6d.)

This is yet another book in the series on Religious Life for which Blackfriars Publications has made itself responsible. The subject is treated in a logical order, starting with its history and following this with the theology of obedience. The article contributed by P. Motte is particularly clear and places before us the sound thomist principles of obedience. Unless obedience is understood in its right relation to the other virtues, it is impossible to give it its true value and importance. In the psychological and experimental section there is a very great deal of most useful matter. If all those responsible for the training of young religious would only take in these pages, much unhappiness would be avoided and fewer square pegs would be found in round holes. After all, here we have the findings of experts not only in the practical sphere but in the speculative as well.

P. Marie Adrian Corselis, O.F.M., does seem to ‘push’ the Franciscan ideal a little and make it appear the only really authentic form of religious life. He says (p. 44): ‘Solicitude for one’s personal perfection is nothing compared with the practical exercise of charity’. But surely ‘solicitude for one’s personal perfection’ is one of the chief exercises of charity? See S. Thomas, II-II, 26, on the order of charity. Again, speaking of the structure of the earlier orders, he says, in the original French, ‘Un fait nouveau et extrêmement significatif . . . sera que les ordres naissants du XIIe siècle rejettent précisément ces structures au moment même où elles vieillissaient et s’effrataient partout, n’ayant plus leur raison d’être’.

This in itself seems something of an overstatement, but the translator makes the latter part even stronger by translating '... at the very moment when it is becoming outmoded, and stale, and has ceased to justify its existence'. 'Outmoded' is hardly the word, nor is 'stale', and certainly not 'ceased to justify its existence'. On page 100 surely we should read 'stature' for 'statue', and Mass should always be spelt with a capital (p. 224)! But these are very small points in an excellent book. May we hope that the *Vie Spirituelle* will continue to convene the meetings which have so far resulted in these books, and that Blackfriars Publications will continue to translate them.

DOMINIC J. SIRE, O.P.

RELIGIOUS ACCORDING TO THE SACRED HEART. By Saint Margaret Mary.

Translated by a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. (Mercier Press; 7s. 6d.)

The subtitle of this book is 'The Individual and Collective Instructions of Saint Margaret Mary to her Novices'. It is a translation from the French of part of Volume II of *The Life and Works of Saint Margaret Mary* by Monsignor Gauthey. It consists of seventy-six instructions to novices who have dedicated their lives to the Sacred Heart. All these instructions are extremely practical, the first fifty being addressed to individual novices or sisters. They are written in a style which, though it lacks smoothness, never lacks clarity and often has extraordinary power. This is due not so much to originality of thought and expression, but rather to its unmistakably authoritative tone. On occasions one suspects the saint is merely repeating the very words our Lord has used to herself.

Saint Margaret Mary was Mistress of Novices for only two years, and she had only seven novices. This little book enables anyone with sufficient courage and generosity to increase their number. Here, surely, is an authoritative guide. If anyone doubts the strength of his love for Christ; if he thinks he is spiritually a heart case; here are full instructions as to treatment. Saint Margaret Mary is the perfect heart specialist, and her instructions the perfect cardiograph of a healthy heart. It must not be thought that this book is limited to novices in its appeal. There is a sense in which we are all called to be religious according to the Sacred Heart. That is not something achieved in a novitiate; it takes a lifetime. This little book, of just over a hundred pages, is not one which should be read quickly once. It is a book to be read slowly and prayerfully, a few moments at a time, and often.

The publishers are to be complimented on keeping an authoritative work within the reach of many, even if this means the use of paper backs.

SIDNEY F. BREEN

BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY. By Thomas Gilby. (Longmans; 25s.)
 SOCIETY AND SANITY. By F. J. Sheed. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

'All this accords with the Platonists writing in a more elegant style than Aristoteleans usually command, and revealing more beauty in their shadows than any others can in their present substances.' In quoting these words of Fr Gilby at the beginning of the review of his own book and Mr Sheed's I do not wish to imply either that Fr Gilby's elegant book does point the difficulty of reviewing Mr Sheed's book: there is so little to say about substance. It is rather like bread, as opposed to wine; you can live on bread but not on wine. As bread is simply to be eaten, so Mr Sheed's book is simply to be read; and both are nourishing if properly digested.

Intended as a kind of companion volume to *Theology and Sanity*, this new book deals with human relationships in terms of what man *is*. After a section on man's nature there is a second section on Marriage and the Family, and a final section on Society and the State. The predominant note is one of Aristotelean sanity. This sanity is particularly welcome in regard to Marriage and the Family, a subject which has recently occasioned much shrill romanticism amongst Catholics; nothing that I have read on the subject has been so helpful as these pages of *Society and Sanity*.

But the full life does include such bouts of divine madness as occasionally burst forth in Fr Gilby's book. Almost always they leave the reader full of sober joy over some fresh, brilliant insight, though sometimes they may just leave him puzzled: 'It is arguable that the Church has been better served by good bad Popes than by bad good Popes' (p. 82); on page 308 we read, 'While noblest regarding its object, religious faith is still the meanest act of mind by its mode'; this statement is footnoted with a reference to the *Summa*, but I cannot find anything corresponding to it in the articles referred to.

The trouble with such light-hearted paradoxes is that they may give the impression that Fr Gilby's work is light-weight, which it quite certainly is not. In fact it is a fascinating and convincing display of how human relations, arising from the interaction of biological facts, spiral upwards through the human mass, community, society and political order into the company of the blessed in heaven. With such a broad sweep it is scarcely surprising that the author's digressions are almost as rewarding as his main theme; for instance, in the middle of an illuminating discussion of whole-part relationships he writes: 'These truths . . . descend into questions of causality, where two total and principal causes may conspire in the same effect: thus what the good man does of his own free will is entirely his and entirely God's.' (p. 65.) Again there are a few pages on original sin worth more than many whole treatises on the subject. (pp. 129-134.)

In some ways the book's deepest interest for *THE LIFE* is to see how its movement follows the movement of St Thomas's own thought—he 'set out to find grace and wisdom, and rediscovered nature and science' (xiv)—because *THE LIFE* (once, of the Spirit) seems to have followed a similar pattern. And an excellent pattern it is, for many people find more edification in works on biology than in the general run of spiritual literature—and even more would do so if the drama of life were always presented with the poetic skill of Fr Gilby: 'How evocative the scientific study of any one civilisation needs to be. Select which you may, and beneath the surface on which the invaders build their towns and leave their ruins, flows a racial life, dark and silent, deeper than civilisation and the institutions of religion, through the world of matter which bears men and sustains them for a time, and to which they all return in death.'

The contrast between Fr Gilby's approach and Mr Sheed's has, I think, been illustrated. In view of the contrast it is heartening to discover them so much at one over an issue which has often left Catholics on the opposite side from the angels: the essential dignity of human freedom. Here is what Mr Sheed says: 'It is part of man's likeness to God that he has intellect by which he can see reality and utter reality as he sees it. To force a man to say what he does not see is the grossest irreverence to man and to God. It blunts man's sense of the value of truth, it twists from its proper use his power of utterance. To prevent a man from saying what he believes is a mild interference, a whole world apart from making him what he does not believe. It is no service to a doctrine, true or false, to force a man to utter it against his will. You only dishonour the doctrine. When the doctrine is a religious doctrine, it is a way of taking the name of God in vain.'

This danger of religious authoritarianism is described by Fr Gilby as follows: 'Instead of a living and growing welcome to a mystery, welling up from grace and operating like the virtues, congenial to man as his own activity, men are drilled to strike a succession of fixed attitudes that have come to be considered appropriate; authority hardens into a legal office . . . the effect is that of business organisation rather than of companionship, the emphasis falls on correctitude rather than virtue, the atmosphere is one of strain rather than of ease, and the first words heard by those who approach it from without are a demand for their submission, not an invitation for their company. All this is overstated, but that is commonly the way with dangers.'

DONALD NICHOLL

RETURN TO CHRISTIANITY. By Sels F. S. Ferré. (S.C.M. Press; 5s.)

There is much talk nowadays about the failure of Christianity. The author of this little book, previously published in America, is much concerned about this 'failure', and yet he calls for a 'Return to Christianity'.

Surely if it has failed it is high time that it were abandoned. But it is only the title of this book which is illogical; as we read, it becomes increasingly clear that, according to Professor Ferré, what we need is not a return to Christianity at all but rather 'a new theology . . . equipped with keen analysis and powerful insights along new and deeper lines'. (p. 29.) This 'new theology' is propounded with, as might be expected, a certain obscurity, in four chapters which treat in turn of truth, the individual, the church and society. Here is a short quotation which indeed speaks for itself with purple eloquence: 'There are, nevertheless, believing souls whose basic intention is to live in and for this fellowship. Many of these have sacrificed the beautiful flower of their loyalty on the showy altar of traditional Christianity or have had their vitality sapped by the false chanting of its servile priests. Yet in the depth of their spirit they have helped to keep alive the reality of the fellowship of intention, forgiveness, and some attainment.' (p. 50.) One is tempted to echo the last two words.

D.S.

STUDIES IN DEUTERONOMY. By G. von Rad. (S.C.M. Press; 7s.)

This is No. 9 in the series of Studies in Biblical Theology, several of which have been noticed in this review. The present work consists of a number of loosely connected essays on Deuteronomy and the writings akin to it. The method is that of form-criticism; the studies are technical in character and of immediate interest chiefly to students. Yet where their conclusions are well-established, these throw new light on the text and add to its spiritual value for ordinary readers. The author's main assumptions are already widely accepted, while his more original line of thought is often attractive. Deuteronomy is a book with a long history. This is generally agreed; it has a groundwork of ancient legislation, but was gradually built up in hortatory form. G. von Rad would connect its earlier development with the gathering of the northern tribes for worship or war at Shechem. After the fall of Samaria the material was carried to Jerusalem; its later form represents a reaction of the pure religious and martial spirit of Levites and Judean people against nature gods and foreign domination. The same spirit informs 3 and 4 Kings, where the sacred writer looks at history from a single theological viewpoint. Rulers are judged, not by political success, but by obedience to God's commands, especially that of a centralised worship and the destruction of the high-places. The fall, first of Israel and then of Judah, has been the fulfilment of God's word of warning by the prophets. The translation, though readable, has some obscurities, and a few printer's errors call for correction.

JOHN HIGGENS, O.S.B.

NOTICES

Quite the best short account of the background and life of **BLESSED MARTIN OF PORRES** is told by Fr Columba Ryan, o.p., in a pamphlet recently put out by the C.T.S. (4d.). It is based at every point upon the established facts; thus Fr Ryan shows that Bl. Martin's mother was an African Negress, not a Peruvian Indian, that he became a Dominican *donatus* or tertiary, not a laybrother. But the account of the Dominican's simple desire to serve and to love others stands out far more clearly and movingly than in high-sounding phrases that have become so hackneyed in hagiography, far more authentically than in the stories of hundreds of miracles and wonders. Bl. Martin has become deservedly popular throughout the English-speaking countries in the past thirty years. This pamphlet will tell you why. The lesson of his life is that of the Word made flesh—uniting so many divergent bloods and races and classes in his flesh. The secret of his holiness is obedience, prayer, penance and devotion to our Lady. And today more than ever before we need a Christian idea of service of others—we find it most vividly in Bl. Martin.

Thomas Merton is at his best when treating of the *fact* of Cistercian life. His *Waters of Silence* was a simple and straightforward account of the history of his Order and it brought with it the breath of those simple cloisters. His life of the Cistercian nun, St Lutgarde, shared this attractive directness, so that we are not surprised to find Desclée de Brouwer publishing a French translation of the book under the title *Quelles sont ces plaies?* (78 Belgian francs).

LIVING IN GOD (Clonmore and Reynolds; 5s.) is one of those rare modern spiritual books which bears the mark of authenticity because written by one who had experienced even more than he had studied the nature of Union with God. The author was a French priest whose notes and papers were published under a pseudonym 'Robert de Langeac', but shortly before this English version was published he died and so released his name—Père Delage, a priest of St Sulpice. The first forty pages are concerned with 'the Soul's Effort', the ascetic aspect of the Christian's reaching out towards God; the rest of the book with God's action in this union and its effect in the apostolate. Some of the notes and remarks on humility and meekness in the first part are extraordinarily valuable; and the whole book is written with an insistence upon silence and quiet that is equally rare. The only criticism that could be made of the book is the author's acceptance of the analytical approach in which 'the soul' is referred to always rather than the person; the imagination, for example, is treated almost as though it were not an integral part of the man. Nevertheless the book can be wholeheartedly recommended; and the translation by Father Moloney, c.s.s.p., makes the reading of it comfortable and unselfconscious.

FREDERIC OZANAM died a hundred years ago and to commemorate the event Professor Charles K. Murphy, author of 'The Spirit of the Society of St Vincent de Paul', has written a short account of the 'spirituality' of that Society based on the writings of Ozanam and of Emmanuel Joseph Bailly, the second president of the Society. **HUMBLE OF HEART** (Mercier; 3s. 6d.), the title suggests the main spirit of an organisation of which, according to Ozanam, no one has the right to be called Founder; and everyone knows that its wonderfully preserved anonymity is one of its special glories. From the beginning Bailly set out to sketch that 'collective self-love' which is the deadly cancer which kills so many Catholic groups and organisations; Professor Murphy's scathing remarks about 'holy rivalry' would be well pondered by many societies.

FRAGMENTS D'UNE CONFÉSSION (Desclée; 39 fr. b.) are the two introductory chapters which Alphonse de Châteaubriant had intended as a preface to his *Itinerarium ad lumen divinum*, a work interrupted by his death in 1951. Among other things he advocates the practice of 'a fast of thought'—*jeûne de la pensée*—abstaining from every useless activity of the spirit. This is surely a form of that creative silence so necessary at all times, but especially for the writers of today if not for their readers. In these pages the author shows the illumination that succeeds such purification; it is in fact the account of his conversion to the full light of faith in Christ.

ST MARIE MADELEINE POSTEL, an account of whose life has already appeared in this journal, introduced the methods of the Brothers of the Cistercian Schools to the education of girls in her France of the early nineteenth century. But she did more than that; she lived as a single-minded and heroic young woman through the turmoils of the Revolution, she lived in many ways the real life of Christ on earth. It was not so much her ideas about education as the intensity of her love that has brought her down to us as a real, live saint. Sister Calista of her Congregation sets her before us in her reality in **LOVE ENDURETH ALL THINGS** (Mercier; 7s. 6d.); and as we read it we are compelled to admit that it is not just one more good Frenchwoman who had a desire to teach the poor and to found a new Congregation. Her plan was a contemplative one which took education into its embrace rather as the first Benedictines taught because they praised God rather than praised God because they taught. The author of this biography brings out these and other points in an unassuming and attractive way that will win many admirers for her foundress.

BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY appeared in earlier times in the art of the monastic manuscripts and so it is good news that Nicolette Gray, author of *Jacob's Ladder* which set out to teach the children the Bible with the help of Anglo-Saxon pictures, has now produced a series of film strips with the same end in view. The prospectus says:

This series is designed primarily to provide visual aids for the teaching of the Christian faith in schools; it is also fascinating material as art and as history. The pictures have been chosen partly for their subjects and vividness of presentation, but above all for their sense of the reality of the spiritual.

Jacob's Ladder Filmstrips should be applied for either from Kay Carlton Hill Film Studios, 72a Carlton Hill, London, W.8., or from the Editor, 9 Essex Villas, London, W.8.

EXTRACTS

The Passion narrative in the late Middle Ages

All students of late medieval spiritual writings are already much in the debt of Professor F. P. Pickering, particularly for the account which he published in 1938 in the John Rylands Bulletin of a Middle High German version of the tale, *The Pious Beguine*, one of the most charming and illuminating examples we possess of the literature of *docta ignorantia*, and, more recently, for his new edition of *Christi Leiden in einer Vision geschaut* (Manchester University Press, 1952). Now, as an appendix to this edition and as a preliminary sketch for the critical work on the history of such Passion narratives as *Christi Leiden* which he promises us, he has published in volume 7 of *Euphorion* (Heidelberg 1953, pp. 16-37) a long article, *Das gotische Christusbild: Zu den Quellen mittelalterlicher Passionsdarstellungen*.

He begins with a passage in *Christi Leiden* which describes in painful detail the ferocity with which our Lord was taken prisoner in the garden, '... with heavy blows from hands and fists grasping weapons, aimed at his nape and between his shoulders, upon his back, at his head, against his cheeks, towards his throat and breast. . . . They tore the hair from his head so that locks of it lay strewn upon the ground: one dragged him along by the hair of the head, another pulled him back by the beard . . .' and he contrasts this with the reticence and austerity of the Gospel narratives. The title of the article perfectly describes its content: here we have, not the awful, remote, hieratic figure of the East, reigning in triumph from the tree, wearing the Precious Blood as a Royal robe, but a late and Western Christ, tormented, lacerated, dying a death horrible in itself and most horrible in its sufferer's Divinity: and the author seeks to discover where the painters and sculptors, the visionaries and preachers of late Western Christendom found the lineaments of the 'Gothic Christ'.

As we should today expect, he turns first to medieval Old Testament exegesis, and suggests that in the fuller work which he has in hand he will examine the contributions of the prophetic writers to the evolution of the various scenes of the Passion: here he confines himself to consideration of

the Crucifixion itself, and of later, specifically Christian sources for the additions. He looks at the influence upon these later writers of the 'typology' of the Fathers: how, for example, such Old Testament scenes as Isaac bearing the wood for his own sacrifice and Moses lifting up the serpent in the desert were held to prefigure our Lord carrying the Cross and hanging from it (and we are at once reminded that Bede tells us that Benedict Biscop brought from Rome a series of paintings for his church at Jarrow to illustrate this 'typology', and that two of these paintings conjoined precisely these Old and New Testament scenes). Professor Pickering also gives several arresting instances where later writers are so much under the influence of such exegetical traditions that they achieve positive Gordian knots of imagery, as when the author of *Umm ex quatuor*, paraphrasing St John 16, 32, made our Lord speak of himself as the wine-press which should be trodden out: and he shows how easily such interpretations of Old Testament images could lead to an accumulation of detail in the Passion narrative. Then, using as one of his demonstrations a most interesting account of the equation 'harp' = Cross in medieval interpretation of the Old Testament, he proposes a theory of 'de-symbolisation', by which he seeks to explain the very common medieval detail of the tormenting of Christ by tugging at his limbs with cords as a literal application of originally figurative language. (The analogies between this theory, and that of the 'figured history' sometimes advanced among historians of the plastic arts, deserve pursuit by Professor Pickering.)

Very briefly, he suggests answers to several highly controversial questions: did European anti-Semitism colour the Passion narratives, or vice versa: are some of the details of these narratives borrowed from accounts of later martyrdoms written by eye-witnesses? In these matters, one looks forward to a detailed presentation of the evidence which leads the author to the conclusions he indicates. But even at this stage, one can wholeheartedly agree with some of his contentions: the present writer's eye was caught by the place where Professor Pickering writes of the increasingly marked influence towards the end of the Middle Ages upon popular devotional literature of representational art, since he has himself made precisely this point (in *Blackfriars*, July-August, 1953) in connection with the *Revelations* of Mechtild of Magdeburg. A comparable case is to be found in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, where she, in her description of her vision of our Lord's betrayal and arrest, gives us a vivid and detailed account of how the Jews fell to the ground at his reply, *Ego sum*, which, closely though it corresponds to St John's narrative, was most probably impressed upon her mind, Latin text and all, by the many *Quem queritis* ceremonies, with their pantomimic illustrations of the story being sung, which she must have witnessed during Holy Week rites. In this country

we are only beginning to understand the importance as sources for every form of popular literature of the things which medieval men and women could see and hear, as against the texts which a few of them could read. Professor Pickering is much to be congratulated upon the enterprise which has led him to undertake such a survey of the Latin and vernacular devotional writings of Northern Europe in his period, and to check his findings against the evidence of the other arts, of which scriptural interpretation may justly be reckoned the most influential.

Two points may be mentioned here in which, even in such a short preliminary sketch as this, the author invites criticism. One is that he nowhere acknowledges the immense emotional force which his many Old Testament quotations from the prophecies gathered from their annual recitation in the Holy Week liturgies, and that in general he seems not yet to have approached the many liturgical studies which could so greatly contribute to his subject. The other is that place might have been found to show that in the fifteenth century some of the ecstatic visionaries, St Birgitta above all, had for their devotees acquired a prestige little short of the authority of Holy Writ. Johann Brugmann, the early fifteenth-century Dutch writer who forms so important a link between the Friends of God and the *Devotio Moderna*, when he writes of the incidents of the Flagellation in his *Life of Christ*, says 'This is not in the Gospels, but it is in the *Revelations*, so I put it down as well'.

Professor Pickering is completely justified in rejecting any mere appeal to 'the spirit of the age' as an adequate explanation of such phenomena. It is the spirit itself of the age which needs explanation: and we may eagerly await the work which he promises us.

ERIC COLLEDGE

The problem of the relation between the Flesh and the Spirit in Christian Asceticism is very well discussed in an article entitled 'The ennobling of the bodily life through grace' in the June-July issue of *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven*. Often enough love of God has led people to a practice of asceticism that did not take into account the physical and psychical strength of the person, with the result that the sense life has been suppressed and a process set in motion which sometimes ended with the cooling of charity. So the important question is 'what is the function of the body in the growth of the spiritual life'.

The writer's central point is that 'man is not so much a body and soul, as an embodied spirit. Our growth in the spiritual life is, too often, hindred through not realising that man is a unity.' And though the Church has always insisted on the primacy of the spirit, it does not mean that it is in a state of enmity with the flesh. In the article the writer spends some time on the question of married life and its place in Christian asceticism.

